

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: York and Cumberland County Hospitals; Infection Control Practitioners; School Nurses; Public Health-Required, Clinicians, Daycare Centers

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Hepatitis A in the Kennebunk Area

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Hepatitis A in Kennebunk Area

Summary: In mid to late September 2008 a cluster of six cases of hepatitis A was reported in a family in the Kennebunk area. This week three additional cases have tentatively been identified. Two of the cases are in members of the extended family. The third case is in an unrelated child. The average incubation period of hepatitis A is 30 days with a range from 15 to 50 days. Given the time interval since the initial family cluster, these newly identified cases most likely represent a second generation of infection. An investigation of the most recent cases is underway.

Health care providers are encouraged to consider hepatitis A infection in persons with recent onset of jaundice, fever, anorexia, fatigue, nausea, dark urine, clay colored stools, and abdominal discomfort. Diagnostic testing should include hepatitis A IgM antibody and liver enzymes (AST/ALT).

All cases of suspected viral hepatitis should be reported immediately by phone to the Maine CDC. Epidemiologists are available to provide guidance on post-exposure prophylaxis with either hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin. To be effective, post exposure prophylaxis needs to be given as soon as possible, but not later than 14 days after last exposure.

Hepatitis A can result in mild illness in children; many will be asymptomatic. In adults, hepatitis A infection can range in severity from mild to life threatening. Case fatality can reach 1.8% in adults over 50 years of age. Individuals are considered infectious during the latter half of the incubation period and for approximately 1 week after onset of jaundice. The virus is excreted in feces and is transmitted by the fecal-oral route. Good hand washing is key to limiting disease transmission.

For More Information: Contact Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. Recommendations for hepatitis A post-exposure prophylaxis are available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5641.pdf>